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Sabbath: The Theological Roots of Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT: It is the thesis of this paper that, in general, the points of emphasis by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development are in close, but not perfect, alignment with the concept of Sabbath-shalom in Scripture. Some differences also exist. Sabbath begins at Creation and is the substance and symbol of God's care for this earth. In Sabbath we rest in God's sustaining power. Sabbath also is integral to covenant relationships. This means that Sabbath is not merely about care for the environment but also about care for all relationships envisioned by the concept of shalom. Both the creation roots and covenant roots link Sabbath to redemption and recreation. Together, these roots give us the direction that humans will journey when caring for each other and for this earth. The fatal flaw in the UN sustainable development movement is presented.

Key words: Business, community, covenant, creation, dominion, environment, imitating God, Jesus Christ, jubilee, justice, lordship, moral relativism, redemption, Sabbath, sabbatical, shalom, sign, sustainable development, Ten Commandments, UN Commission on Sustainable Development, wholeness, work, worship

INTRODUCTION

Over the decades, in trade journals and books, Protestants (Buchanan, 2006; Colwell, 2008; Taylor, 2010; Brueggemann, 2014) and Roman Catholics (John Paul II, 1998) have called for a renewed interest in the Sabbath. The collection of essays on Sabbath from different theological perspectives also illustrates the recent interest in the topic among more than one Christian denomination (O'Flaherty et al., 2010).

At the same time, Christians and non-Christians have called for a stronger emphasis on sustainable development (e.g., Epstein & Hanson, 2006). During the last 30 years, hundreds of journal articles and books have been published touching in one way or another on this topic. For more than twenty years the journal *Sustainable Development* has offered a forum for discussing the issues. For more than thirty years, leaders from many nations and organizations have been collaborating in this global conversation.

Scholars, interested in the spiritual foundations of business or who discuss business ethics, have introduced a connection between Sabbath and business (Chewning, Eby, & Roels, 1990; Stackhouse, 1995; Rempel, 2003; Wong & Rae, 2011). These scholars do not explore specific ways in which Sabbath touches business.

Christian social justice activists have tied Sabbath to an emphasis on sustainable development including the fair

distribution of resources. Called "Sabbath Economics," the movement encourages socially responsible investing, giving to the poor, community investing of wealth so that more than just a few enjoy its benefits, and investing in organizations that are working directly with the poor (Gardner, 2005; Shimron, 2006; Colwell, 2008).

Once the deeper significance of Sabbath is understood, the Christian will find interest in this since Sabbath-keeping, in all of its dimensions, is a response to a gracious God who created and redeemed us. A believer who wishes to fully emulate the Creator-Redeemer (Ephesians 5:1) will want to develop a more complete understanding of what Sabbath means for every aspect of life, including business.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the theological foundations of Sabbath and compare these to contemporary points of emphasis on sustainable development as recently voiced by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

To advance its purpose, the paper will consider two streams of thought in turn, Sabbath and sustainable development. Regarding Sabbath, the dual roots of creation and covenant will demonstrate the close relationship between Sabbath and the biblical concept of shalom. Following this, the linkages between Sabbath and sustainable development will be illustrated in the recent work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and its

predecessor commission beginning in 1984. A weakness of the UN Commission's work will be highlighted.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The term Sabbath comes from the Bible. It refers to multiple layers of a faith community's relationship with God. At the observable, outward layer, Sabbath refers to consecrated time, the seventh day of the week, to be kept holy. This day when no work is done is set apart for worship to God. Sabbath also refers to the day of worship that also provides rest, which renews for future service. This rest applies as much to the earth as it does for humans. At a much deeper level, Sabbath refers to our entire relationship with God where persons in community rest from human efforts to achieve reconciliation with God. Sabbath is commitment to the set of principles designed to foster flourishing life. Thus, Sabbath is a miniature representation of all the principles of a flourishing relationship with God, namely, his Law.

Imbedded in the term sustainable development are two ideas. Sustainable refers to caring for the earth in such a way that both present and future generations can benefit from earth's bounty while justice is preserved. Development refers to the wise use of resources for the purpose of fostering flourishing life for all, including the most vulnerable. This includes economic development and technological development.

SABBATH ROOTS: CREATION AND COVENANT

The succinct description of Sabbath's purpose first appeared in the Torah and has been preserved for millennia as a central part of the Judeo-Christian subcultures. In the words of the covenant, Sabbath is explicitly linked with creation:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11)

Sabbath in Creation

Human history begins with gifts of God's love not an arbitrary command of God (Miller, 2009, p. 123). The earth itself is one gift, and the Sabbath is another, a gift designed to foster a deepening relationship between God and humankind, a gift which represents the reality of a joyful life of peace (*shalom*) envisioned for all God's creatures.

The Creation narrative in the Bible describes God as committed to all creation. He continually sustains it by his power (Psalm 104:30). Therefore creation must have inherent value. Scripture calls humans to worship the Creator (Psalm 102:25-27; 104; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3, 10-12). Defacing, abusing, or destroying creation is an attack on God. The land, and by logical extension our whole environment, is not just a natural resource for human exploitation. It is holy and must be cared for as loyal stewards would care for their own (Leviticus 25:1-7). The environment in which God placed humans is social.

Wholeness, not dualism. The ancient Hebrew concept of life is quite different from the Greek ideas that would emerge later and which would come to dominate Christian thinking after the New Testament was written. In the creation and covenant, we see no artificial separation of body from soul. Wholeness in the biblical way of thinking includes not only holistic persons but also persons in community: Wholeness is not complete unless persons are in community. In Sabbath, keeping the soul is not more important than preserving the body (Berry, 2000). It is the whole person in community who responds to God through worship, rest and, work. Sabbath worship is not merely about bringing the soul into closer relationship with God. Rather, worship on the Sabbath is to be correlated with worship during the workweek so that the whole person and whole community journey together toward *shalom*.

This provides a deeper perspective on redemption and faith, also. Redemption is not only for the spirit or soul of a person. Redemption involves restoration of the whole person, the community, and the whole earth. In terms of redemption, a Sabbath view of redemption is consistent with the New Testament passages (Romans 8:21; 2 Peter 3:13). Likewise, faith is not just an ethereal, spiritual experience of the soul. Biblical faith means faithfulness to God by the whole person in all dimensions of community life.

Coworkers with God. It is in Sabbath worship that the relationship between God's work and our work comes into focus. In both Testaments of the Bible,

we find expressions that it is God who sustains life on earth (Psalm 36:9; 54:4; 104:27-28; 145:15-16; Luke 12:6-7, 24; Matthew 6:26-32; 7:9; Acts 17:28; Romans 8:32; Colossians 1:17; 1 John 4:9). Humans, made in his image, are to be coworkers with God, as responsible servants, to sustain flourishing life. The passage about the first hallowed seventh day lies between the commission to subdue and have dominion over (develop) the earth (Genesis 1:26-28) and the commission to serve the earth by caring for (sustaining) it (Genesis 2:15). Thus, awareness of our role in sustaining the earth is integral to Sabbath worship.

Lordship of Christ. Sabbath is a symbol that God is Lord of our life (Andreasen, 1978). Sabbath is a return to an Eden-like existence where work was free from its toil. The Creation Sabbath anticipates the covenant and God's grace. If this is true, it also must anticipate the Incarnation where God comes to earth to live among us (Philippians 2:1-11); the Cross, whereby all things are reconciled to God in Christ (Colossians 1:19-20); and the Resurrection, in which by faith we can participate in newness of life (Romans 5:10).

Purpose of creation, shalom. Whatever conclusions are drawn about Sabbath's broader principles, the core purpose of Sabbath, as a day of rest and worship, cannot be forgotten. In this, the implicit purpose of Sabbath is the overall well-being (shalom) of the community in all dimensions: covenant relationship with God, social harmony, international peace, physical health, and economic prosperity. But Sabbath is also a direct experience of shalom in the community weekly and every seven years.

While the New Testament writers do not explicitly make the connection between Jesus the Creator, Sabbath, and care of the earth, implicitly they accept the Old Testament thinking. In their view, Jesus is the fulfillment of all the prophetic hopes and dreams for renewed well-being. Jesus is the Creator of all things (John 1:1-3). In him is abundant life (John 10:10). He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28). In him, we still live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). The Redeemer-Messiah embraces not merely the sinful souls of human beings but rather the entire cosmos. He holds all things together by his sustaining power (Colossians 1:15-20). He recreates the earth at the consummation of the great plan of redemption (Revelation 21:1-22:5).

Jesus demonstrated the fulfillment of the prophetic dimension of shalom by healing on Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:10-18). One Sabbath day after healing a

person, Jesus claimed that his ministry is a fulfillment of a shalom prophecy from Isaiah 61:1. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18).

Linkage between work and worship. Sabbath is rest from work even as it anticipates work after worship and worship in work. Unlike the reason for human need of rest from work, Divine rest was a "rest of his satisfaction and his stamp of approval" of what he created for humankind (Hafeman, 2001, p. 45). Another dimension of Divine rest is that the creative work was not complete until God had rested on the seventh day (Dederen, 1982). This makes Sabbath a part of Creation and not merely an afterthought to Divine creative activity. It suggests that Sabbath, though not considered work per se, was part of Divine action.

The Sabbath as a worship experience is inseparable from and interdependent with work. Work is intimately related to our worship (service) to the Creator who gave the gift of work. One might even say that Sabbath would lose some of its meaning if on the other six days no work was done, if work was done in a way that disrupted human well-being, or if work did not honor the Sabbath-Giver. The original Sabbath concept embraced humans working in a material world. Yet, the aim of such work was not accumulation of material possessions but rather to enter into rest with God while serving the needs of others including that of the earth.

The Hebrew narratives tell that humans disrupted the hidden potential of Sabbath by attempting to live autonomously from the Creator. This marred the human experience with work, with the earth, and with Sabbath. Work became burdensome toil. Workers needed rest from the weariness of toil. More than this, humans needed a constant reminder that confidence in human work should never replace trust in God. It was not the breaking of the Sabbath as a day of worship that resulted in burdensome toil but rather the breaking of the fundamental covenant relationship with God which placed the first couple at odds with God and with their environment. Accordingly, the promises of recovered peace begin with God's promise of restoration (Genesis 3:15-18). This promise became the seed for hope that shalom once experienced by humans in Eden will one day be restored (Amos 9:13). We rest in the hope that one day the peace of Eden will be restored at the consummation of God's great plan of redemption.

Sabbath in Covenant.

Attention now must be focused on the relationship between Sabbath and the covenant relationship that God established with humankind. This paper argues that a pillar of the Scripture message regarding God and his intentions toward us is embodied in the Sabbath, intentions envisioned implicitly in covenant promises and eventually made explicit in the Ten Commandments.

The Sabbath Command in Exodus frames it in terms of creation while the same commandment restated in Deuteronomy 5 reminds us of the covenant. Here, Sabbath becomes a parable of redemption in which God's creative deliverance results in a rest of peace (Dyrness, 1977, p. 172). As such, Sabbath is a "type" of redemption from oppression of sin.

Covenant identity of Israel. Though it is not the first command given by God to the people when he gave the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath command became the cornerstone and capstone of Israel's day-to-day life. It is the first command given to Israel after leaving Egypt and on the occasion of the giving of manna (Exodus 16:22-30). When stated in Exodus 20:8-11, it becomes a sign that God first "created" Israel by liberating them from slavery. He then asked them to commit to a relationship designed to foster well-being. Thus, Sabbath provides an important anchor point for Israel's covenant-based identity. On this point Dumbrell (1984) writes: "Israel is to reflect upon the question of ultimate purposes for herself as a nation, and for the world over which she is set. For in pointing back to creation, the Sabbath points also to what is yet to be, to the final destiny to which all creation is moving" (p. 35). This parallel between the Creation account and the covenantal creation of Israel as a nation has been observed by more than one scholar (Lowrey, 2000; Hafemann, 2001).

Sign of the Covenant. Sabbath is a sign of the covenant and is even spoken of as a covenant itself: "You shall surely observe My Sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.... Celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant..." (Exodus 31:13-17 See also Ezekiel 20:12).

Sabbath would cease to be a sign of the covenant if the principles of covenant were accepted only one day of the week for worship but ignored or rejected the other days of the week during work. Accordingly, Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to God. At the giving of manna, God tested their loyalty on Sabbath (Exodus 16). The Sabbath became "the chief symbol of testing" (Geller, 2005, p.

11). Geller concludes that "...the Sabbath stands for loyalty to covenant and its violation for apostasy" (p. 11). Thus, the whole covenant relationship with God is envisioned by Sabbath, not just a day of worship and rest.

Purpose of covenant, shalom. The purpose of the Ten Commandments is to foster flourishing life of shalom (Psalm 119:165; Cafferky, 2014). Since it is embedded in both the Creation narrative and the Ten Commandments (the covenant), the command to keep the Sabbath is a test of loyalty to the relationship with God. Sabbath tests human willingness to lay aside wealth-producing behaviors. In our response to God's grace, by limiting the economic dimension of shalom, God makes room to enjoy the other dimensions of shalom.

The Ten Commandments describe the terms on which God intended to give blessings promised in the covenant relationship. The Law, and especially the Sabbath command in the Law, reveals God's secret to flourishing life (Goldingay, 2006, pp. 187-190; Miller, 2009, pp. 122-123; Rayburn, 1984, p. 75). But it is more than instrumental; it is also inherently valuable. In particular, the Sabbath command lays at the center of the ten obedience to its precepts as much a response to grace as it is to duty born of loyalty. Accordingly, the Sabbath is intended to be not a burden but a privilege, something that other nations did not have and might well be jealous of once they learned of it (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). When it is a burden, this is an indication that the deeper relationship with God has been lost (Isaiah 58).

The day of rest points to the senselessness of uninterrupted work that "tends to rob man of being creatively involved with the world, until he is taken hostage by considerations of yield and profit" (Andreasen, 1978, p. 41; See also Eichrodt, 1957). Accordingly, Sabbath is:

- A time for being and not necessarily doing
- A day that relieves us of the heavy burdens of survival (Exodus 34:21)
- A day that has the potential to protect us from totalitarianism (Andreasen, 1985, p. 99)
- A day of rest from constant drive fueled by ambition and greed
- A day of liberation from secular pressures and duties (Guy, 1985, p. 32)
- A warning against becoming full of our own power (Dederen, 1982, p. 301)
- A constant reminder that through faith in God we can be content in God's providing care

Sabbatical, Jubilee, and Shalom. Taking a day off from work each week limits wealth acquisition. This

means giving up 14.29% of productive time. As a set of broader principles, it means keeping in focus the larger purpose of work and, when necessary, placing limits around work so that a flourishing life can be enjoyed in the larger community both now and in the future. But Sabbath is not just giving up something; it means gaining something inherently valuable.

Sabbath under the covenant thinking is extended to managing the land. The land was to be given a rest every seven years (sabbatical). This rest for the land was not merely for the utilitarian value of improving the productivity of fields. It also reflected the right of the land to be sustained. Sabbatical taught that God is the ultimate owner of land and other wealth-building assets. These resources cannot endlessly be exploited. Humans are expected to have dominion over the land, but also to serve it and not hold the land in bondage.

Every sabbatical year slaves were to be freed and debt was to be released. The Sabbath would be a reminder of the faith community's own experience in slavery (Exodus 21:2; Andreasen, 1978). Shalom could never be experienced across the community unless it reached into every level of society including those in debt. Additionally, shalom could not be experienced if members of the community continually preyed upon the generosity of others to bail them out. Borrowing was discouraged (Deuteronomy 29:12-13; Proverbs 17:18; 22:7, 26-27); however, it was recognized that there are occasions when borrowing is necessary (Exodus 22:25). Only by fulfilling responsibility to repay debts (2 Kings 4:1-8; Psalm 37:21) as well as generosity and release from debts (Deuteronomy 15:1, 7-11; Proverbs 19:17) could shalom be ensured.

The concepts of sabbatical (Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:4-5; 26:34-35; 2 Chronicles 36:21) and the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10-54; 27:17-24) illustrate that Sabbath is more than mere cessation of work one day in seven for worship. Sabbath is an expression of physical justice toward the land as well as social justice toward the poor. These same ideas are carried into discussions about the experience of shalom (Psalm 72:2-6; Jeremiah 5:23-25) showing how Sabbath is prophetic of the wonderful flourishing life when justice of God is spread throughout the earth. Working together with God, humans have a responsibility to make right the injustices which have oppressed the whole created order of all living things.

Social justice. In the days of the ancient prophet Amos, the deeper meaning of the Sabbath had been replaced by a shallow form. During the Sabbath hours, traders became impatient for the Sabbath to pass so that

commercial activity could resume which involved taking advantage of customers. Though the hours of Sabbath might be set aside and no commercial work performed, Sabbath is not a valid sign of covenant for the person who is itching for the hours to pass so that he can go back to the market to perpetrate injustice (Amos 8:4-7).

Imitating God. Covenant principles are enunciated in both the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18; Amos 5:14) and the New Testament (Matthew 7:12; Mark 12:31-33; Romans 13:8-9; Galatians 5:14). God loves creation. He continually sustains it by his power. Therefore creation must have inherent divine value. We are called to worship the Creator (Psalm 102:25-27; 104; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3, 10-12; Revelation 14:7). And, humans are called to imitate God in how we relate to each other and to the earth. Sabbath observance emphasizes the integration of humans with the total environment. In resting on that day, humans in community reinforce the relationship with the Creator and his creation. In serving during the week, we also honor creation.

Community. The Sabbath presents the biblical idea of a community that exists around commitment to principles of flourishing life. These are the spiritual and civil principles (laws) of social responsibilities. In Judaism, covenantal communal needs take precedence over but are not destructive of individual needs. Pava (1998) states that "God's religious and ethical commandments are directed first to the community and only after to individual members of the community" (p. 606). Sabbath is, by nature, communitarian. It is designed for a whole community to experience together.

Tensions. Several interrelated tensions are embedded in Sabbath that must be managed by the community. Indeed, these tensions require goal-directed community effort. These tensions are summarized as follows:

- Work vs. rest
- Short-term vs. long-term
- Using and enjoying the earth vs. preserving and caring for the earth
- Building productivity that results in prosperity vs. sharing prosperity
- Encourage responsibility for repaying debts vs. release from responsibility to repay debts
- Enhancing life for the present generation vs. fostering flourishing life for future generations.

Summary. A Sabbath basis for sustainable development must be built on the connection between creation and covenant. Covenant principles encompass the relationship between all persons in the faith community as

well as the relationship between persons and the whole creation (Miller, 1979). Sustainable development is as much a communal affair as an individual matter. When the covenant relationships are broken, a corresponding disorder is experienced in creation as a consequence. When injustice is allowed in the community, this can be disruptive to the sustainability and productivity of the physical environment. And when covenant relationships are redeemed, when reconciliation occurs, this has a corresponding positive impact on flourishing life (shalom) for all of creation.

The findings from Covenant and Creation theology are summarized in Table 1, which illustrates the dual emphases in the Sabbath concept directly from Scripture. In the creation account (Genesis), the commission to subdue the earth (development) is coupled with the purpose of serving the earth (sustainability). Also, the giving of the covenant (Exodus – Deuteronomy) includes directions for economic and technological development (work, pruning,

harvest) that are constrained by keeping the weekly Sabbath and the sabbatical. At the center of this is Sabbath.

Now that the biblical roots of Sabbath have been traced, we must now consider the concept of sustainable development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development has been defined in various ways depending on the particular perspective that is in view. One broad definition comes from the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development, discussed below. This definition emphasizes the meeting of human needs:

In essence, sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change

Table 1: Sabbath is the Center of Sustainable Development in Scripture

| | Development | Sustainability |
|----------------|---|--|
| | Subdue the earth. | Serve the earth. |
| Creation | And God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:28) | Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15) |
| Sabbath | | |
| Covenant | <p>“Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” (Exodus 20:9)</p> <p>Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop. (Leviticus 25:3)</p> | <p>“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...in it you shall not do any work....” (Exodus 20:8-11)</p> <p>During the seventh year the land shall have a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard. (Leviticus 25:4)</p> <p>Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger... (Lev 19:10)</p> |

are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations.” (Brundtland, 1987, 2.I.15.)

A variety of perspectives exist on the elements of sustainable development objectives (Hermans & Knippenberg, 2006). Imbedded in the phrase, sustainable development are two kernels of truth. First, the term sustainable refers to providing care for the entire earth such that the present generation and future generations can enjoy the rich bountiful earth at the same time as conserving resources while contributing to a flourishing ecology. Second, the term development refers to the need to make wise use of the earth for ongoing and flourishing life. Accordingly, sustainable development has been defined as “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Blowfield & Murray, 2008, p. 235).

These two kernels of truth are consistent with the three dimensions of organized international efforts that have taken over the last thirty to forty years: environmental needs, economic development, and social justice. These three dimensions are interrelated and interdependent. Each dimension requires the other two. If one dimension is emphasized to the detriment of the others, all dimensions suffer over the long run.

Secular writers on the topic of sustainable development make no explicit reference to Sabbath, though some have seen the connection between religion and sustainable development (Bhagwat, Ormsby & Rutte, 2011). Sustainable development scholars have identified some ethical values that may be the assumptions behind discussions on the topic. For example, Hermans and Knippenberg (2006) discuss the variety of perspectives on the elements of sustainable development objectives. Justice, ecosystem resilience, economic progress, durability, and efficiency are commonly mentioned as values. When considering the various points of view, the common denominators seem to be the ideas of justice, ecosystem resilience, and efficiency. Most proponents of sustainable development include not only the current generation but also future generations.

The World Commission on Environment and Development

The Brundtland Report (Brundtland, 1987) of the World Commission on Environment and Development was not the first to raise awareness of the problems of environment and development; however, its timing was important. Coming at a time when the arms race also had peaked, the commission first met in October 1984. The

race for natural resources had been going on for decades but was picking up momentum. The commission, independent of but collaborating with the United Nations, focused its attention on “population, food security, the loss of species and genetic resources, energy, industry, and human settlements — realizing that all of these are connected and cannot be treated in isolation one from another” (Brundtland, 1987, Chapter 1, para. 40).

For over two years, commission members worked to create a report on the key issues. Their report included the following findings:

- Environmental crisis is inseparable from economic crisis and energy crisis.
- Accelerating population growth, especially in urban areas is occurring.
- Most of the growth of industrial production has occurred since 1950.
- The resources gap is widening between the “have” nations and the “have not” nations.
- The influence of industry in policy making is heavy; yet, the industrial sector has used much of the planet’s ecological capital. For decades, industries have taken more out of the earth than they have put back.
- The needs of small farms have been largely ignored in developing countries.
- Natural resources in some countries such as Latin America were being used to pay down national debts instead of for development.
- Poverty and unemployment increased.
- Institutions that are interested in finding solutions to specific problems tend to work independently of other institutions trying to solve other problems that are related.
- Economies of countries are linked worldwide. It is not just the economy of a few particular nations that need further development, but the entire world economy needs to be developed in a way that is sustainable rather than unsustainable.
- Some population groups are more vulnerable than other groups. The vulnerable need to be protected.
- Political stability, peace, and security also must be established; otherwise the other problems cannot be managed.
- Shared leadership is needed to change the policies of nations and international organizations that all nations can agree upon. New policies must emerge from international cooperation and within international legal frameworks.

Economic development needed to be sustained, but the environment also needed to be sustained and cared for and the poor also needed care. Clearly, these somewhat competing interests needed to be managed together rather than separately. Needed was coordination among government organizations, non-government organizations, cultural organizations, scientific researchers, and commerce (just to name a few of the key players).

Other initiatives related to the work of the World Commission have produced guidelines for businesses, especially multinational enterprises. For example the *UN Global Compact* and the *CAUX Principles* offer guidelines for business in terms of sustainable development. Barkemeyer, Holt, Preuss, and Tsang (2014) wonder if the original vision of the World Commission has been lost.

UN Commission on Sustainable Development and Sabbath

Following the work of the World Commission, in 1992 the United Nations established the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. In 2009 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to convene a Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

During the intervening years in over a dozen sessions convened by the Commission, the ideas of sustainable development have also become one of the most popular themes across economic sectors and around the world. Goals have been established to guide the efforts of the world community of nations and institutions (United Nations, 2014).

These goals of sustainable development, and the dialogue that has arisen among members of the UN Commission-related entities, are essentially attempts to reconcile, or find ways to manage, the sometimes competing goals of economics, social justice for current and future generations, and responsible care for the earth over the long term.

Creation and covenant, the two dominant roots of Sabbath, provide from a biblical perspective the ethical principles upon which sustainable development can succeed. Providing for the poor and caring for the earth are factors that place constraints on economic development. These constraints become a structural factor which, over time, can gradually limit unbridled egoism. Similarly, Sabbath, a miniature representation of the entire covenant in terms of the purpose of these principles, is designed as a structural constraint on selfishness. By keeping, Sabbath we limit our economic development, give the earth rest

while caring for the poor. Sabbath is the short-run experience of a long-term vision of well-being.

Accordingly, the point of this review is that the goals that have come from these international collaborative efforts, though mainly secular, find a close, but not perfect, parallel with Sabbath-shalom principles rooted in creation and covenant. Additionally, these goals are examples of the deeper principles at work in Sabbath-keeping with one exception, which will be presented below.

Caring for the poor must include eliminating poverty and hunger. If poverty and hunger are not eliminated or drastically reduced, these evils will diminish the ability of the earth and communities to provide for all. Poverty and hunger cause social unrest and migration of people. As a result, physical and political safety of food and communities could be threatened. Nations that have plenty would receive pressure to care for the destitute. The burden of poverty worldwide could become an excessive constraint on economic development. Economic development assumes that most people are contributing to their own needs as well as the needs of others. By caring for the earth in a sustainable way, we increase the carrying capacity of the earth to the benefit of all. Economic development also must encompass rich and poor. To accomplish this, eliminating poverty and hunger requires sharing wisdom. But wisdom is not a one-way communication process. It, too, is a communal dialogue that involves access to education.

These deeper principles are further illustrated and expanded upon in Table 2, which compares the UN Commission goals for 2030 with the deeper implications of both creation and covenant based on the theological foundation laid out above.

The goals of the UN Commission are challenging and difficult. They reflect deeply intractable problems highly resistant to even organized intervention. Progress thus far in each major region has been limited. One reason, of course, is the complex nature of heretofore intractable problems. Another is the structural limitation of the coordinating efforts. For example, in Europe with twenty-four nations participating, Steurer and Hametner (2013) believe that while some positive advances have been accomplished, only a small fraction of the total potential has been reached from international coordinated efforts across public and private sectors. The structural limitations point to yet another tension at work in this process — namely, the need for coordination at the international policy level that is co-present with the need for systemic changes at the local level. National leaders may be able to promise that their country will support policies and

Table 2: UN Commission Goals Compared with Theological Roots of Sabbath

| UN Commission Goals 2030 | Theological Roots of Sabbath-Shalom |
|---|---|
| 1. Eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere | Creation envisions bountiful prosperity for all. Covenant relationships comprehend the caring for the poor and structuring relationships so that poverty is mitigated. |
| 2. End hunger; achieve food security and improved nutrition; promote sustainable agriculture | Creation provides the variety of food-bearing plants through a sustainable system of reproduction by way of seed propagation. Humans care for the land to increase its carrying capacity. Covenant relationships provide a means by which the whole community can experience the value that comes with food. |
| 3. Promote physical well-being of all ages. | Creation describes the foundation of respect for physical health, life and well-being. Covenant relationships are structured so that flourishing life is fostered leading to shalom. But, shalom is not complete until both seniors and children (and their children) experience flourishing life. |
| 4. Achieve inclusive and equitable access to education and life-long learning opportunities. | Creation occurred by the wisdom and power of God. Covenant relationships are fostered as we learn and share with each other the wisdom of ways in which the benefits of shalom can be experienced in different ways in different places. |
| 5. Achieve greater gender equality for women and girls. | Creation establishes the interdependence between men and women. Creation also raises the value of females beyond the bare minimum set by the UN. Both sexes must work together in order for the true potential of flourishing life can be realized. Covenant relationships are founded on the principle that it is the relationship that must be nurtured. Any relationship must include extended relationships among all in the community. |
| 6. Ensure availability of water & sanitation. | Creation comprehends the vital importance of water for the sustenance of life. Water is the life-giving fluid necessary for day-to-day existence of humans and animals. The water cycle recognized by King Solomon (humidity from oceans and lakes rises to the sky, rain feeds the earth, rain water drains into streams and rivers and back to the ocean and lakes) carries the gift of sustaining life. |
| 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable energy. | In order for humans to fulfill the commission to have dominion over and care for the earth and all living things, energy must be expended. Forms of energy can be found to mitigate the impact of toilsome labor on life. Covenant relationships must be considered when new forms of energy are developed such that the impact of energy sources does not create toilsome labor, injustice or harm to creation. |
| 8. Foster sustained economic growth that is inclusive including employment and decent work for all. | Creation and covenant both envision humans working in community. Persons in community share in the contributions to the greater good of community goal of a flourishing life. Work itself contributes to the sustenance of social flourishing as well as physical well-being. |
| 9. Build a resilient infrastructure for industrial development and innovation. | Shalom, if it is to be a community experience shared widely, must be achieved by concerted effort. This requires entrepreneurial and moral leadership. It also requires organizing human effort in groups in ways that foster covenant relationships. Organizing results in the creation of interconnected human groups which work together forms the community infrastructure to foster shalom. |

Table 2: UN Commission Goals Compared with Theological Roots of Sabbath (continued)

| UN Commission Goals 2030 | Theological Roots of Sabbath-Shalom |
|---|---|
| 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries. | Creation provided the basis of the entire earth and its systems to support life. This is a whole planet. As the carrying capacity of the earth has increased, so has the technical sophistication with which humans interact with each other. Covenant relationships must not be seen as limited by national borders or geographic boundaries. Thus, relationships necessary for sustaining life must be viewed as global rather than local. |
| 11. Make cities and human settlements resilient, safe and sustainable. | Creation provides the larger context in which humans organize their efforts for flourishing life. As humans gather together in close proximity to each other to gain the benefits of production efficiencies, these arrangements themselves must be sustainable. Covenant relationships must not ignore the structured living arrangements of the persons in community who are working together to foster shalom. The creation theme begun in Genesis becomes transformed into re-creation allowing for the presence of city in Revelation. |
| 12. Foster sustainable consumption and production patterns. | In both creation and covenant we find the foundations for production and consumption. Production will require organized effort. Production must also be limited by Sabbath. Consumption requires placing limits on what otherwise would be unfettered desires. |
| 13. Combat climate change. | Creation narrative tells of the need to serve and care for the earth. Covenant relationships extend not only across the current community but also across the generations. The current generation cannot say it is prosperous until the grandchildren are prosperous. |
| 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans and other marine resources. | Creation shows the separation of the land from the water. This specialization provides for efficient production of life in both. Covenant relationships, modeled by God, encompass humans and all living things. |
| 15. Protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of the earth. | Air, water and land continue to be the key resources for life regardless of whether people live in urban areas or rural areas. The land is still one of the basic resources upon which human food sources depend. Land is the primary home of humans and this home must be included in covenantal relationships. It is holy, set apart for special service, to God. |
| 16. Promote peaceful inclusive societies that maintain access to justice. | Creation and covenant both envision the communities where justice is spread throughout. Justice is like a life-giving stream that flows down like a river to nourish all in the community. Covenant relationships must be structured in such a manner so that justice is the foundation of how we make decisions regarding the use of this earth and its resources. |
| 17. Strengthen the means and partnerships needed for sustainable development. | Creation and covenant offer the root thinking fundamental to seeing relationship as a partnership where all parties involved understand the good that can be given to others in all that is done. Covenantal thinking is all about the relationship and making the relationship outlive any one transaction or exchange. Thus, shalom must involve work to nourish these partnerships that are necessary for implementing shalom-producing policies. |

procedures that foster sustainable development, but local leaders interested in benefiting in the short term may be hesitant to support with actions the promises that have been made.

As much as the Commission goals align with principles of shalom that one would think could be widely shared values, regional and local values are also competing for attention. What is shalom for some stakeholders may be perceived as contrary to shalom by other stakeholders.

Christians, as they come to more fully understand the importance of Sabbath, will increasingly take leadership roles in the global conversation about sustainable development. Such a conversation will involve sharing leadership with others on multiple points of emphasis.

Christians training to become business leaders will see their role as much larger than becoming successful in business, as important as this might be for bringing glory to God. Success in business is indeed important as it contributes to the development dimension of sustainable development. But when business success dominates the goals and agenda of Christians in business without regard for the poor or the earth, then it begins to undermine the other dimensions of sustainable development. It may be true that business has done more to eliminate poverty and hunger than any other single sector of society; however, generally business, as an institution in society, has not had as its goal the principles of flourishing life. The larger purpose of business when seen through the lens of Sabbath becomes fostering flourishing life, both now and in the future, serving the people closest to us while keeping in mind how those the farthest away from us (geographically and culturally) are impacted.

A parallel exists between the UN Commission goals and biblical ideas. An important difference also exists: Faith relationship with God is characterized by loyalty to absolute, objective moral standards which lie outside the human community. While the efforts of the UN Commission appear to be efforts toward shalom, nothing in the UN Commission's goals expresses the importance of spirituality and agreement upon fundamental, absolute moral principles. The conversation regarding generally accepted moral principles — GAMP (Cafferky, 2014) — has been running concurrently with, but not in close coordination with, the global conversation regarding sustainable development.

Another difference is over the issue of ownership. The UN Commission's assumption appears to be that humans are merely co-owners of the earth. In contrast, Scripture states that the earth belongs to God (Genesis 1:31;

Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1). As God's agents or stewards, humans have the responsibility to care for what God owns. This is not an unimportant distinction. As stewards, we answer to an authority structure higher than any that humans might create. Our motivation combines an interest in sustaining flourishing life with bringing honor to God by imitating his character of sustaining life.

The global sustainable development conversation seems to be an attempt to mix two things that cannot mix: Moral relativism and principles of Sabbath-shalom. Moral relativism is based on the belief that if two cultural groups have opposing views of morality, both can be right. In contrast, Sabbath-shalom principles are based on the belief that God is the source of absolute, objective moral principles. These two views are in contradiction.

Herein lies what may be the weakness of the sustainable development goals represented above. Without an absolute, objective moral standard, outside and above any given society or cultural group to which the bulk of cultures and nations agree, the complicated efforts focused on sustainable development on a global scale may not progress much farther in the future.

One could argue that the goals, and the principles underlying these goals, are an attempt to articulate commonly agreed moral values so necessary to further success. This may be the case; however, given the differences that exist, unless the UN goals are integral to spirituality, success worldwide may be limited.

The opposite extreme is dangerous and has the potential for destroying the efforts of the UN Commission and related entities. For example, if someday someone gets the bright idea that everyone on earth should be required to worship the same God in exactly the same way, that loyalty to God must be expressed in the same ways the world over, that everyone must be forbidden to do business on a particular day of the week, religious faith would become oppressive as it has been in the past. Accordingly, one additional tension exists in the sustainable development dialogue as well as in the conversation about Sabbath — namely, the importance of preserving freedom to choose within boundaries.

SUMMARY

It is the thesis of this paper that, in general, the points of emphasis by the UN Commission are in close, but not perfect, alignment with the biblical concept of Sabbath-shalom. Sabbath begins at creation and is the substance

and symbol of God's care for this earth. In Sabbath, we rest in God's sustaining power. Sabbath also is integral to covenant relationships. This means that Sabbath is not merely about care for the environment but also about care for all relationships envisioned by the concept of shalom. Both the creation roots and covenant roots link Sabbath to redemption and recreation. Together, these roots give us the direction that humans will journey when caring for each other and for this earth.

In the recent 30 years work of the commissions referenced above, we see elements of both creation thinking and covenantal thinking present. While not explicitly a religious work, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development is in close alignment with the implications that come from deeper principles of Sabbath-keeping. However, the fatal flaw in the sustainable development movement may be that it appears to be based on cultural relativism, which is inherently opposed to Sabbath-shalom. A set of commonly agreed moral boundaries frames the next frontier of dialogue among promoters of sustainable development if we expect further progress in such a complicated set of issues.

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